

CULMSTOCK RURAL DISTRICT.
COUNTY OF DEVON.

Annual Report of Medical Officer of Health
For the Year ended 31st December, 1898.

CULMSTOCK,
February 6th, 1899.

GENTLEMEN,
I beg to present my report for 1898, and am pleased to be able to say that it is a favourable one, and shows improvement all round.
Below is a Table showing the Birth and Death Rates for the past four years :—

	1895	1896	1897	1898
Birth Rate per 1000 of Population	33·9	27·7	27·07	31·3
Death „ „ „ „ „ „ „ „ „ „ „ „	11·5	16·3	21·5	12·5

Both show a decided improvement, though not quite reaching the standard of 1895.
107 Births were registered, 50 Boys and 57 Girls.

There were three Deaths recorded from zymotic disease, viz : One from diphtheria, and two from whooping cough, giving a zymotic death rate of ·87 per 1000—the average for the rural districts of North Devonshire for 1894, 1895, 1896, and 1897 being 1·12.

The Infant Death rate per 1,000 births registered was 113·2 as against 139·7 in 1897, but this is still rather high as the average for 1894, 1895, 1896, and 1897 for rural North Devonshire was 93·5, although the rate for 1897 for England and Wales was 156.

Of the 43 Deaths, 8 occurred in persons over 80 years of age, and 12 in infants under one year.
The mortality was highest during the months of January and December, with 8 and 6 deaths, and lowest during the months of July, September, October, and November with 2, 2, 1, and 0 deaths respectively.

Below is a Table showing the numbers of deaths during the past four years with their various causes.

	1895	1896	1897	1898
Diseases of the Respiratory System	14	8	16	13
„ „ Circulatory „ „ „ „ „ „ „ „	4	10	12	3
„ „ Nervous „ „ „ „ „ „ „ „	6	2	6	3
Accidental Deaths	1	3	3	1
Cancer	4	2	4	4
Other Causes	12	31	33	19
Totals	41	56	74	43

Below are Tables showing the birth and death rates for the several parishes during 1897 and 1898.

			Birth Rates.		Death Rates.	
			1897	1898	1897	1898
Culmstock	...	...	23·5	23·5	17·6	9·4
Hemyock	...	..	29·8	18·3	21·8	11·4
Clayhidon...	...	...	24·7	26·9	17·9	15·7
Burlescombe	...	...	32·3	44·1	29·4	11·7
Holcombe Rogus...	...		23·7	49·1	20·3	16·9

During the year only four cases of notifiable infectious disease have occurred in your district, all being diphtheria and occurring in two houses at Clayhidon. Further spread was prevented by isolating them as much as possible, and disinfection was carried out by your Inspector. The school holidays were also extended for an extra week.

There has been a pleasing freedom from other zymotic disease so far as I am able to judge, whooping cough, influenza, and a few cases of chicken pox being all I am aware of.

I have inspected the sanitary arrangements of all the Public Elementary Schools in your district. Improvements were suggested at Hemyock which were carried out satisfactorily; at Burlescombe alterations were made with some improvement; at Holcombe Rogus alterations are now in progress, and at Culmstock and Clayhidon matters were found to be in good order.

I have analysed over twenty samples of drinking water during 1898 with varying results; in those cases in which the supply was unsatisfactory steps have been taken to remedy the evil, with generally satisfactory results.

Your Inspector has reported two or three cases of overcrowding and in each case the order of your Council has brought about the desired improvement.

The Bakehouses and Slaughter-Houses in your district are in a satisfactory condition. No proceedings have been taken under the Food and Drugs Act.

Besides the various cases which we have found it necessary to bring under your notice your Inspector and myself have suggested improvements in matters of sanitation which have been carried out by property owners voluntarily—a method of procedure which I think is appreciated by the latter.

In the event of any serious epidemic occurring we are still very unprepared as regards efficient isolation and disinfection. Of course so long as we are so fortunate and have so slight an incidence of zymotic disease things appear all right and the instructions given to individual householders as to disinfection, washing of clothing, bedding, rooms, etc., and the fumigations carried out by your Inspector seem all that is needed. But will this happy state of affairs always continue? Supposing for instance a case or two of small-pox occurred in your district, if you had some means of at once isolating them (for this is the period at which isolation is of most use) probably the matter would end there. As regards apparatus for disinfection, if the outlay be considered too great for your district, could not some arrangement be made with a larger and better equipped local sanitary authority for the loan of their apparatus in an emergency. If we are to be allowed to exercise the use of our conscience in the matter of vaccination, it is doubly important that all our other lines of defence should be strengthened, and I beg you to give these matters your serious consideration.

During the past year I have received every assistance from your Inspector whose Annual Report I append hereto.

Faithfully yours,

W. HORTON DATE,

Medical Officer of Health to Culmstock Rural District Council.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1898.

GENTLEMEN,

At the beginning of the year there were two outbreaks of diphtheria at Clayhidon, and one death resulted. In these cases the houses were properly disinfected. Since then there has been no outbreak of notifiable disease in your district.

Improvements have been made in the sanitary arrangements of the Elementary Schools at Burlescombe and Hemyock and work is now in progress with that object at Holcombe Rogus, your Medical Officer having specially inspected the Schools during the year.

Continued improvements have also been made in the sewerage of Hemyock and Culmstock by additional flushing and the provision of additional stench traps, &c.

New houses have been inspected and certificates granted and defects in the water supply and in the drainage of several dwellings have been reported to you and your orders therein carried out.

There has been one report of overcrowding which was satisfactorily abated. The accommodation, however, in many cottages is very limited, there being very frequently no more than two bedrooms.

The usual inspection of Bakehouses and Slaughter-Houses has been made and their condition was satisfactory.

Your Obedient Servant,

R. W. BEADON.

14th February, 1899.

